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American Conservatism and Homeland Security

Philippe Legassé
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Introduction

In the aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, a contemporary truism holds, American conservatives allow security to 'trump' other political concerns, be it trade, immigration, or multilateral foreign policies. By and large, this maxim is valid. September 11 led the American conservative movement to elevate the security of the United States and the American people above most other policy considerations. Yet the ascendancy of security-focused policies masks divisions which exist within the conservative movement over three issues. First, how American security is best guaranteed; second, what should be secured; and third, which foreign states can be trusted to help protect the United States and the American people. Many self-identified conservatives disagree about whether the United States should adopt a defensive or offensive strategy in the war on terror, whether the United States' economic security should be sacrificed for the sake of more robust homeland security measures, and whether the United States' traditional allies can be trusted to bolster American security. While all conservatives agree on the need for strong security and defence measures in the aftermath of 9/11, the form and content of these efforts are often born of compromise and debate.

This paper explores the fissures within the American conservative movement over homeland security. The argument here is that conservative views about this issue are diverse. Specifically, it will be proposed that, on matters relating to homeland security, American conservatives can be categorized into four divergent groups: protectionists, enterprisers, neo-conservatives and Jacksonians, and, realists. Recognizing these groups and their differing perspectives is worthwhile, since it allows analysts and foreign governments to better decipher the mixed signals American conservatives send when speaking about US homeland security. Finally, the paper examines how Canada has worked with these differing perspectives to advance a cooperative security agenda with the United States that conforms to Canadian national interests.

Protectionist Conservatism

Although these four categories of American conservatism are ideal types and most members of the conservative movement fall under more than one type, treating them separately provides a more detailed picture of where the fault lines of the conservative movement lie over homeland security policy.

Protectionist conservatives are the first group. Personified by conservative Democrats such as Senator Robert Byrd and given a voice by publications such as *The American Conservative*, protectionists represent a contemporary variant of the isolationist tradition in US conservative thought. Like the isolationist conservatives who opposed America's participation in the First and Second World Wars, protectionists argue that the security of the United States is best guaranteed by limiting America's involvement in the affairs of other peoples, and by adopting defensive security policies. In a phrase, the protectionist worldview is 'live and let live'; as long as the United States ignores the world, the world will ignore the United States. To quote archetypal protectionist Pat Buchanan, this current of the conservative movement hopes that security will be found by keeping the United States a 'republic, not an empire'. The protectionists are inspired by John Quincy Adams, who noted with a mix of pride and caution in his 1821 Fourth of July address that 'America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy....She might [one day] become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit.'¹

Protectionists, however, are aware that a disengagement from the world is an insufficient means of protecting the United States. They are also staunch believers in a virile security and defence posture as long as it serves, first and foremost, to guard the American homeland from both internal and external threats. With respect to terrorism and other asymmetric threats, protectionists favor stringent border, immigration, refugee, and travel controls. Protectionists also support the expansion of domestic surveillance and police powers, though they expect these to be sanctioned by Congress.

Given their opposition to free trade accords such as NAFTA, protectionists are prepared to sacrifice cross-border trade flows

for the sake of tighter borders. Indeed, 9/11 allowed protectionists to link homeland security policies with their efforts to make the United States more autarkic. For protectionists, 9/11 demonstrated the dangers of ignoring the United States' dependence on foreign energy, foreign markets, and permissiveness towards foreign students and visitors holding expired visas. For protectionist conservatives, therefore, the 9/11 tragedy came with a silver lining. Although the events heightened their fears of the 'enemy within', the attacks also brought protectionist critiques of American immigration, refugee and trade policy to the fore. Hence, protectionists believe that defensive homeland security initiatives should have two purposes: they should both protect the United States from terrorists and spark a reconsideration of America's foreign economic and immigration policies.

Many protectionists are also wary of cooperative security agreements between the United States and its traditional allies. Because Canada and Europe are thought to have lenient immigration and refugee policies that can be exploited by terrorist groups, protectionists seek additional restrictions on travel, trade, and immigration between the United States and these countries. In fact, as pertains to Canada especially, protectionists are the driving force behind the increasing 'Mexicanization' of the United States' northern border. Protectionists are propelling efforts to erect a fence along the 49th parallel, to have greater national and coast guard surveillance of the northern border, and to lend moral support to the so-called 'minutemen' vigilantes in the northern states. In the defensive war on terror, protectionists believe little should be left to chance or goodwill among friends.

Enterprise Conservatism

Enterprise conservatives differ from protectionists on nearly every issue. Champions of free trade, more open immigration policies, and North American integration, they argue that the homeland security policies must not prejudice the free flow of legal goods and people between the United States and its trading partners. As is often argued on the opinion pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, enterprise conservatism argues that the United States must not be forced to choose between security and prosperity. If Washington allows homeland security to undermine trade and travel, America's economic security and soft power will be undermined over the long term.

To bolster their case, enterprise conservatives highlight that the United States' economic success since 1945 resulted from liberal foreign economic policies. Reverting to protectionist policies and harsh border controls would compel other states to act in kind, thereby restricting America's access to foreign markets and harming several key sectors of the American economy. They worry that some security measures aimed at protecting the American homeland might reverse or slow the two-decade advance of freer trade. In addition, enterprise conservatives posit that exporting American goods to foreign markets can foster a greater appreciation of American culture and the benefits accrued from the US hegemony. As popularized by Thomas Friedman's McDonald's theory of international peace (which notes that states who have McDonald's franchises tend not to fight each other), enterprise conservatives maintain that trade and travel should play a central part in the war on terror's 'hearts and minds' operations. To reduce animosity towards the United States in the world, Washington

must continue to sell the American brand, which means exporting American goods and accepting more foreign tourists, visiting workers, and students. While hocking the American brand can produce resentful anti-Americanism in the short-term, it can gradually foster interdependent relationships and mutual respect, however grudging. Similarly, if the United States openly welcomes foreign workers, travelers and students, word of the advantages of liberal democracy and free trade, and of the vital role American power plays in buttressing them, will continue to spread. Enterprise conservatives are aware that one must stay close to those one wishes to convert or assuage.

Enterprise conservatives, however, are also aware that stronger homeland security measures are a necessity post-11 September. What enterprise conservative seek to do, then, is to craft defensive security policies that are compatible with existing trade and travel flows. To do this, enterprise conservatives promote security initiatives that involve the voluntary cooperation of the private sector and other states. Examples of this type of effort include the Container Security Initiative (CSI), International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code), and the Canada-United States Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program. Each of these security measures involves the United States, the private sector, and foreign governments working together to ensure an open but secure flow of goods and people across land borders and into ports.

Within North America, enterprise conservatives believe that security and mutual prosperity can be best achieved if Canada, the United States, and Mexico form an integrated security perimeter. Under a continental perimeter, all three states would adopt common security policies (including immigration and refugee regulations) to keep threatening elements out of North America, while easing intra-continental commerce and travel. Enterprise conservatives are aware that, for such a perimeter to pass Congressional muster, the common security procedures that would be part of the perimeter must reflect American standards. Until such a perimeter is negotiated, however, enterprise conservatives are devoting their energies to countering protectionist security initiatives. For instance, they are working to weaken the protectionist-inspired Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative - a program that will require travelers to show a passport or other secure identity document before entering the United States.

Neo-cons and Jacksonians

Neo-conservatives and Jacksonian² conservatives argue that, in the end, American homeland security can only be guaranteed by winning the war on terrorism overseas. While they agree that homeland security measures must be strengthened, they believe that these defensive tactics are secondary to the primary objective of defeating America's enemies abroad. Their approach to homeland security, therefore, focuses on the offence. Unless there is a fundamental cultural and political shift in the greater Middle East, neo-conservatives and Jacksonians contend, the United States will always be vulnerable to asymmetric attacks launched by determined and cunning terrorist groups.

Essentially, the neo-conservative and Jacksonian perspective is the right's version of the 'root cause' argument: until the motivation to attack the United States is removed, American secu-

rity will be endangered. Taking a cue from the interwar period, neo-conservatives and Jacksonians hold that reactive policies, including those forwarded by protectionists, are doomed to fail over the long term. For these conservatives, defensive measures such as tighter border and immigrations controls serve to guard America's flanks while the US armed forces bring about regime changes in the greater Middle East.

Underlying the neo-conservative viewpoint is the assertion that Americans must embrace the virtues of courage and justice. A failure to heed the call of virtuous action when faced with the threats posed by fundamentalist Islam's peculiar form of nihilism would be an abdication of moral leadership. And a failure to assume moral leadership in the world would signal a decay of the American ideal and the Republic's exceptional duty. If, as Charles Krauthammer argued, the post-Cold War era was the 'unipolar moment', then for neo-conservatives, the post-11 September era is the 'unipolar obligation'.

In a similar vein, Jacksonians hold that the United States is entitled to offensively protect its interests, rights, and principles against any and all enemies. Jacksoninans thus adhere to a type of an unapologetic nationalism that refuses to be bound by sentimental 'global citizens' and the trepidations of other states. For the Jacksonians, to relinquish the right and responsibility of a forceful self-defence would be to abandon the very principles of the United States, its founders, and its constitution.

Neo-conservative and Jacksonian attitudes towards border and travel controls are shaped by other states' contributions to the war on terror overseas. Countries that are reliable partners in the war on terror are more likely to elicit sympathy from this segment of the conservative movement regarding travel restrictions imposed on their goods and citizens. Since travel and border controls are not the main concern of the neo-conservatives and Jacksonians, however, their support does not guarantee that a foreign state's goods and people will be able to enter the United States with greater ease.

Finally, it is important to note that the neo-conservative and Jacksonian vision is backed by a critical force in the American conservative movement: evangelical Christians. As pollster Daniel Yankelovich demonstrated in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*³, evangelicals strongly support the notion that the war on terror must be fought overseas and that American security will be found in transforming the greater Middle East. Like neo-conservatives, evangelical Christians see the war on terror as a moral challenge - one which demands an active, forceful response. Similarly, in line with Jacksonians, evangelicals believe in America's exceptional right to defend itself by whatever means Washington deems necessary. Given that evangelicals form a large portion of the Republican Party's electoral base, their endorsement bolsters the neo-conservatives' and Jacksonians' influence over conservative politicians.

Realist Conservatism

Realists are the fourth group of conservatives influencing America's security policies. Contrary to the defensive focus of the protectionists, integrationist aspirations of the enterprisers, and offensive emphasis of the neo-conservatives and Jacksonians, realists argue that Washington must adopt a layered approach - one that divides resources and attention between

overseas operations, continental efforts, and immigration, border, and travel controls. The realist perspective is often articulated by members of the foreign and military services, intelligence officers, and defence academics.

As presented in the Pentagon's *National Defense Strategy and Homeland Defense and Civil Support Strategy*, a layered approach denies that American security can be guaranteed by focusing exclusively on either the United States' borders, continental cooperation, or overseas military campaigns. Washington must have the ability to meet threats wherever they present, or may present, themselves. Likewise, realist conservatives acknowledge that a balance must be found between security and prosperity, and offensive and defensive strategies. To give preference to one over the other, realists argue, is near-sighted and fanciful. Accordingly, realist conservatives draw from, but also attempt to moderate, the three other conservative perspectives.

Since realists are aware that even the United States' vast human and financial resources are finite, they argue that defensive measures at the United States' borders and among the continental neighbours must be informed by principles of risk-management, rather than political expediency and covert protectionism. In practice this has led realists to advocate targeted screening procedures at the borders and selective site protection within the United States. Instead of devoting a notable portion of the homeland security budget towards rural areas, for instance, realists suggest that the Department of Homeland Security concentrate on more probable targets such as nuclear reactors and large urban centers. Similarly, realists question the utility of erecting a fence or deploying a large-scale paramilitary presence across the 49th parallel, given that traditional border crossings can still provide terrorists an inconspicuous means of entering the United States from Canada.

Realists also question the feasibility of trying to fuse Canadian, American, and Mexican security efforts under the guise of a continental perimeter. Since each of these states jealously guards its sovereignty and right to independently defend its borders, realists recognize that incremental and issue-specific cooperation is preferable to a grandiose, continent-wide security regime. Instead of entering into laborious and potentially lengthy negotiations to create a perimeter, realists urge the North American neighbours to devote their time and energies towards mutually advantageous and uncontroversial bilateral security agreements. Realists further worry that homeland security and the profit motive are often at odds; while governments must consult the private sector when crafting new security policies, it is risky to expect the private sector to properly implement novel security practices. In the end, realists warn, security is the government's responsibility.

Finally, realists are skeptical of neo-conservative and Jacksonian efforts to win the war on terror overseas. Though realists agree that some expeditionary operations (such as the dismantling of the Taliban regime) are vital for protecting the American homeland, they are equally aware that other interventions, (such as a prolonged presence in Iraq) can drain resources and potentially instigate new terrorist attacks against the United States. For realists, surgical military interventions of short duration are preferable to campaigns aiming at radically transforming the greater Middle East. As exemplified by the work of Andrew Bacevich, Barry Posen, John Meirsheimer and

Robert Pape, and the lamentations of Brent Scowcroft, Richard Armitage, Richard Clark, and certain disgruntled CIA officers, realists urge American policymakers to recognize the limits of American military power and the 'blowback' effect of cavalier interventions and nation-building exercises.

In sum, American conservatives do not share uniform opinions about how Washington should protect the United States or its citizens from terrorist attacks. Members of the American right disagree about the balance between security and prosperity, offensive and defensive security measures, and what level of cooperation to pursue with America's continental neighbours and traditional allies. Stereotypes aside, American conservatives hold nuanced and complex views about how best to protect the United States and to secure its citizens.

Canada's Approach⁴

Since September 2001, the Canadian government has sought to marginalize protectionist conservatives' security policies, while moderating those of the enterprise, Jacksonian, and neo-conservatives. Protectionist policies threaten Canada's prosperity by undermining the free flow of legal goods and people across the Canada-US border. As part of Ottawa's efforts to undermine protectionist elements in the United States, the Canadian government has proposed several bilateral border security agreements, including the Smart Border Accord. By doing so, the Canadian government set the parameters of the Canada-US border security debate before the protectionists could do so.

While Ottawa is open to certain enterprise conservative ideas, such as working with the private sector to protect existing travel flows at the Canada-US border, the Canadian government recognizes that a North American security perimeter is unworkable. Perimeter-style schemes are opposed by influential nationalist groups in Canada and would constrain Canadian freedom of action, sovereignty, and independence in matters of immigration and refugee policy. In addition, Ottawa worries that the inclusion of Mexico in a perimeter-style security arrangement would weaken Canada's bargaining position with the United States. Specifically, there is a concern that if Washington deals with both Canada and Mexico simultaneously, the United States will blur the distinction between, and respective problems of, the Canada-US and Mexico-US borders. Canada's sizable economic relationship with the United States and

active security and defence cooperation since 2001 risk being ignored. Ottawa is equally aware that many Canadians are uncomfortable with the neo-conservatives' and Jacksonians' emphasis on the offensive aspects of the war on terror. Though Ottawa joined the United States in the dislodging of the Taliban in Afghanistan, neo-conservative and Jacksonian arguments were unable to persuade the Canadian government to take part in the Second Gulf War. Although the Canadian government supports the idea of spreading democracy in the greater Middle East, Ottawa is loathe to condone the use of force against states whose ties with terrorist cells are unclear.

Ottawa's attempts to moderate the protectionist, enterprise, and neo-conservative and Jacksonian wings of the American conservative movement implicitly mean that the Canadian government sides with the realists. Like the realists, Ottawa has endorsed a layered and balanced approach to Canadian and continental security and the war on terror. The Canadian government recognizes that finite resources must be allocated carefully, and that prosperity must be coupled with security if Canada is to continue to benefit from its unrivalled access to American markets. To date, espousing policies consistent with those advocated by American realist conservatives has allowed Canada to negotiate bilateral security agreements with the United States that serve the Canadian national interest.

Whether this trend continues, however, is largely dependent on whether the protectionists, enterprisers, neo-conservatives and Jacksonians, or realists command the most influence over the Canada-United States security relationship (or American homeland security policy writ large) in the future. Whichever segment of the conservative movement dominates the American right's homeland security strategy, though, the Canadian government must recognize that security, however it may be pursued, is America's foremost concern.

Notes:

¹Quoted in Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (New York: Mariner, 1997), 36.

²The term 'Jacksonian' refers to President Andrew Jackson and is taken from Walter R. Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

³Daniel Yankelovich, "Poll Positions," *Foreign Affairs* 84 (September/October 2005).

⁴The argument in this section is drawn from Joel J. Sokolsky and Philippe Lagassé, "Suspenders and a Belt: Perimeter and Border Security Relations in Canada-United States Relations," *Canadian Foreign Policy* (forthcoming).



Philippe Lagassé is a doctoral candidate at Carleton University. This paper was originally presented at the UQAM Raoul Dandurand Chair and Woodrow Wilson Centre for International Scholars conference on the American conservative movement, held in Montreal on 9 February 2006.

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